

“THIS LONE BRIGHTNESS”:
FRANCES HUBBARD FLAHERTY AND THE TRUE DHARMA EYE

A Professional Project
presented to
the Faculty of the
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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This professional project, completed by

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Abstract

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Although Robert and Frances Flaherty used the term “nonpreconception” to describe the explorative dimension of the Flaherty films, the term was ultimately questioned by Frances herself as an inadequate expression of the transformative quality of these cinematic artworks which the term sought to capture. The collective films of Robert and Frances Flaherty present a vision which has not been explicitly claimed by any religious tradition. Yet, in this vision there is encountered a non-discursive link between salvation, enlightenment, and transformative experience in general. Thus there are significant implications in this elusive quality for various modes of artistic expression as well as for inter-religious dialogue and understanding. Zen suggests an approach to exploring their work which is not only consistent with their point of view, but indeed was the way Frances Flaherty began to speak of the Flaherty art in her later years.

The preconception herein presented is that the Flaherty films may provide a nonverbal epistemology which can inform, expand, and enrich religious experience. If the Flaherty vision is appreciated in a way which presents a unique hermeneutical tool for correlating seminal values among diverse religious traditions, the films may not only be rediscovered in themselves, but moreover may refer to a deeper, more profound, *discovery* of the ineffable Source of life itself. Perhaps these flickering lights on a screen may provide a key to seeing “this lone brightness.”

Through analysis of the Flahertys’ art, their own statements, secondary commentary, overview of the various branches of Mahayana Buddhism applicable to the

problem, and through the medium of an experimental film utilizing methodology reflecting the Flaherty approach as well as a Zen perspective, this project demonstrates a correlation between “nonpreconception” and the *sunyata* of Zen.

The challenge is to integrate film footage with a research paper. With Father Matthew Keltz, OCSO, as subject the camera will open its eye. As the reader of the dissertation becomes the viewer of the film, the correlation of “nonpreconception” and *sunyata* should become recognized in what Frances Flaherty called, “the way of the camera.”

Being unstained is like meeting a person
and not considering what he looks like.
...it is like not wishing for more color or brightness
when viewing flowers or the moon.

Dogen Eihei, Secret Treasury of the True Dharma Eye

Acknowledgements

“This Lone Brightness” points directly to the light that shines in the darkness and has never been extinguished. This light is an expression of multiform varieties of religious experience: salvation, liberation, insight, transformation, *prajna*, *satori*, and enlightenment itself. The names are many, but returning home we recognize the family.

My spiritual family includes dozens of friends, teachers, mentors, students, parishioners, and many a stranger who just happened on the scene. There is little distinction in this family between those tangibly present and those alive forever in the eternal Now. They are all there in the following pages, a great cloud of witnesses indeed.

Therefore, since we are thus surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let me name a few whose lives and mine have intersected on this shore, in the land of the living, and who have provided gracious hospitality on the way. To these, and countless others, I am gratefully indebted.

Rena Elkins Bever.

Tava Elizabeth Bever.

Alice Venessa Bever.

My father who preached his final sermons from a wheelchair, and his father, a pastor who died in service, a prayer service to be precise.

My mother: A lotus in fire.

Manford and Tava Harter, picaresque/sainted great-grandparents.

Father Matthew Kelty, OCSO, monk of Gethsemani. Indeed all the monks of Gethsemani who have shown me what Christ looks like and have turned the light around that I may see the Christ in me.

Professor Delwin Brown unlocked the front door.

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First Christian Church, DOC, Olney, IL and Bethel Congregational Church, UCC, Ontario, CA who served me by allowing me to serve them.

The many who helped shepherd this project to fruition, especially Professor Jack Coogan, Frances Flaherty’s trusted messenger; my friend and teacher for thirty-five years. The great instigator.

D. Marie Grieco who opened the hidden archives that they might find life here.

Professor Louis Ruprecht, a brother.

Not least, Daisy Fidelio, fair weather or foul, expresses the wordless *koan*.

Frances Hubbard Flaherty, whom I never actually met, but we did talk, in an extraordinary manner of speaking. She sent me a message a long time ago, in the last days of her earthly life, encouraging me to do this. So it is, a promise kept.

By the effortless grace of Amida and the mercy of Christ, may we *see* the clear and boundless light even now enveloping us, binding us together, penetrating from the depths to the heights in every direction: In the words of Master Lin Chi,

“This lone brightness before my eyes now, this person plainly listening to me.”

Michael Bever

May 2006 +++

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for **Rena and Elinor Jean.**

Ever thus.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

~

All art is a kind of exploring.
Robert Flaherty, Odyssey of a Film-Maker

Nonpreconception is the precondition to discovery....
Frances Hubbard Flaherty, Odyssey of a Film-Maker

...seeing is not reflecting on an object as if the seer had nothing to do with it.

...seeing, on the contrary, brings the seer and object together....

Paradoxically stated, when seeing is real seeing, there is no seeing....

Daisetz T. Suzuki, The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind

The thing about Zen is that it pushes things to their ultimate limit
 where one has to choose between madness and innocence....

It might be good to open our eyes and see.

Thomas Merton, Zen and the Birds of Appetite

Listening to audio-taped conversations with Frances Hubbard Flaherty,¹ reading transcripts of her personal notes as well as her various published materials, and studying the documentary film with her as subject, Hidden and Seeking, one comes away with a sense of struggle. Many of these materials were produced near the end of her long and productive life. As her physical presence, “like ice turns to water and water to steam,”² transcended the mystery, she was wrestling with a word, a definition, something to articulate the “innocent gaze”³ with which she and her filmmaker husband approached their lifework.

She often spoke of the films in terms of Robert Flaherty’s work. Regardless, it is impossible to speak of the body of work without recognizing the essential collaboration of Frances Hubbard Flaherty. Thus this research shall attempt to distinguish between Frances’ attempts to articulate the elements of Robert Flaherty’s particular genius and the Flahertys’ uniquely creative collaboration which resulted in the Flaherty films.

“Nonpreconception” was a word she chose to summarize their work.⁴ The coined term was reinforced by Frances Flaherty’s engagement with what she termed a “core library,”⁵ a personal library representing a broad scope of humanities, including psychology and religion. In her “flexible binder”⁶ in which she recorded her own thoughts (as well as pertinent quotes of others) she wrote that a friend had advised, “Put it all in one word and keep to that, keep saying it....’ The word I have chosen is ‘nonpreconception,’ an explorer’s word... a state of mind. When you do not preconceive, you go about finding out.”⁷ Nonpreconception was more and less than she was trying to convey, or so it seemed. Frances Hubbard Flaherty was still refining, still defining, still searching for *le bon mot* shortly before her death as she pondered aloud on film in Hidden and Seeking.

Retreating to her core library she would engage the masters of thought, art, and spirit. We know that at least one source of inspiration was Daisetz T. Suzuki who held a unique place of honor as spiritual master to the famed Kyoto School.⁸

Zen (or Zen Buddhism) held a fascination for Frances Flaherty. Never claiming to have knowledge or direct evidence of specific Eastern influence on Robert Flaherty, she came to believe, to the consternation of some,⁹ that this “way of Zen” as presented in the book of the same title by Alan Watts, was the “way”¹⁰ she was attempting to describe.¹¹

She waxed on the virtues of Japanese *haiku* (a form of poetry reduced to 17 figures which expresses in elliptical, abstractly simple language, “stopping and seeing”; a verbal *snapshot* of a moment in time, often describing a visual experience or natural scene) as a way of communicating Robert Flaherty’s creative, wordless, expression of Zen. As she wrestled with a way of articulating Robert Flaherty’s contribution to the art of film, she affected *haiku*-like phrases, always looking for the most succinct, direct, and powerful way

to sum up a life of discovery and creation. In the preface to the Centennial edition of her book, Odyssey of a Film-Maker, the work itself is compared to a Zen *koan*¹² (a question with no apparent answer and seemingly, to the “uninitiated” at least, without meaning. Yet *koans* are principal means of “sudden enlightenment” of the Rinzai Zen tradition).¹³

While she read widely, the bibliography of authentic Zen literature during the 1950s and 1960s when Frances Flaherty was establishing the “core library” was relatively small. Nevertheless, “the core” was filled with early Western translators of East Asian thought as well as primary texts. Her reading list also included the works of some whose presentation was perhaps as much influenced by the social and cultural trends in the West as their grasp of the ancient ways of the East.

Still, Zen masters remind us that we are all beginners. Knowing is *not knowing*. Seeing is *not seeing*.¹⁴ The very world of the everyday is nirvana itself. It is not somewhere else. In this spirit of innocence, this openness, this “letting be,”¹⁵ Frances Flaherty began to push language to its boundaries as she presented her own vision. For, in the end, it was her vision, as well as Robert Flaherty’s, that she was describing. Perhaps she, as well as anyone, really saw the Flaherty films. Who better than she, Robert Flaherty’s artistic collaborator, muse, and fellow traveler, could speak to what was perhaps right before our eyes, all the time?

*“Going into a wild field, not choosing,
Picking up whatever plant comes to hand,
Rootless but finding life,
Apart from the ground but not falling.”*
Right before your eyes it has always been there...
why don’t you speak?
If you don’t know it in your daily life,
where then will you look for it?
Better find out.
Yuanwu, Zen Letters

CHAPTER 2

Why don't you speak?

~

Empty your mind of all thoughts.
Let your heart be at peace.
Watch the turmoil of beings,
but contemplate their return.

...returning to the source is serenity.

...when you realize where you come from,
you naturally become tolerant,
...kindhearted as a grandmother,
dignified as a king.

Immersed in the wonder of the Tao,
you can deal with whatever life brings you,
and when death comes, you are ready.

(chapter 16)

Tao Te Ching of Lao Tzu
(Stephen Mitchell translation)

Come, see real flowers
of this painful world.

Basho,

On Love and Barley
(Master of Japanese haiku)

Frances Flaherty's deep desire to speak the spark that fueled the Flahertys' explorations around the world became an expression of her own life-force. Like the prophets and poets of all generations, she used many words to say that what she was trying to say was somehow unspeakable. "Words played no part in it; it went beyond words. It was simply a degree of seeing."¹⁶ She spoke of flashes, moments of insight,¹⁷ thus epiphany is a word she may have considered. Indeed, the Flaherty films were epiphanies. Frances Flaherty herself had an enlightenment experience of sorts in Samoa, while they were making *Moana*. Once again, she refers to the experience as *a degree of seeing*.

Like a clap of thunder or a flash of lightning... everything seemed to fall away from me, everything but the immediacy of the moment and the presence... I saw every least thing as though I had never seen it before... I had come to some sort of threshold, and stepping over had come to a new world and found myself a new person.¹⁸

Some commentators conjecture that it was the Samoan experience that opened Frances Flaherty to Zen.¹⁹ For her, as for many other Westerners in the late twentieth century, there was something compelling in Zen. The sense of spontaneity, freedom and creativity seemed to complement, even to enhance, this “seeing” that Robert Flaherty wanted to convey through the medium of his films. Frances Flaherty came to believe that the Zen eye was one with the Flaherty eye.²⁰ (Meister Eckhart is cited by both Christians and Zennists as one who bridges Zen and Christianity in his radical iconoclasm and the emphasis on getting beyond the self in order to contemplate the greater reality. Eckhart was one of Frances Flaherty’s sources, according to the bibliography of “the core.” Meister Eckhart proclaimed that the eye with which he saw God was the same eye in which God saw him, in one uninterrupted movement of love.²¹ A similar theme is presented in Dogen Eihei’s The Secret Treasury of the True Dharma Eye.)²²

Frances Flaherty’s instincts were ahead of her time in terms of interest in Eastern thought among Western readers. She did not live to see the proliferation of Zen materials that have become available in English. Along with the popular Zen writers, the bookstore shelves today are laden with all sorts of books with *Zen* in the title, including translations of ancient, peregrine Chan and Zen texts never before available outside their cultures of origin.

Remarkably, however, the waves crashing on the Irish shore in Man of Aran bring us startlingly close to the sort of experience presented in countless *haiku* and in the Zen-

Buddhist scriptural canon. The quiet, patient, way Robert Flaherty gazes out with the camera is meditative even in the heat of action. This is the “mindfulness” of the masters of Zen. Paying attention. The opening scenes of Louisiana Story may be viewed as a primer for the contemplation of *sunyata*.

His moral judgements stopped short at the end of Creation...

By some magical short cut,
in a climate of elemental violence,
the Garden of Eden could be found again....

Arthur Calder-Marshall, The Innocent Eye

CHAPTER 3

**“Zen is not a religion, it *is* religion. Zen is not an art, it *is* art”:
A Brief Introduction to the Kyoto School**

~

(The Kyoto School is not) a fixed entity...
rather it was like one giant comet,
a shooting star with a shining tail.

Nakai Masakazu,
quoted in Zen and Philosophy:
An Intellectual Biography of Nishida Kitaro

The use of an indefinable term like *sunyata*
is not so much delineated theoretically as disclosed
as a contemplative tool to guide and reach deeper insight.
...it is enough not to be spiritually colorblind.
Frederick Franck, in the Prologue to the Buddha Eye

Zen is art, Zen is music, Zen is movement,
apart from this there is nothing
in which one can have peace of soul.
Nishida Kitaro, in a note written in 1905

Zen is not a religion, it *is* religion. Zen is not an art, it *is* art.
Keiji Nishitani, Religion and Nothingness

Nishida is perhaps the first of the world-theologians of our times...
Nishida is as much a biblical or Christian theologian as he is a Buddhist theologian.
But in the final analysis, his global theological insight is grounded
in the methodological procedure of his own text.

(Nishida) rejects the identification of his logic of paradox with the logic of synthesis...
the form is a symmetrical, but not sublational one.
It is a logic of dynamic tension of opposites without higher synthesis.
David Dilworth, in the Introduction to Nishida's Last Writings

“Without higher synthesis.” Without sublation. The Kyoto School is and has been
revolutionary in expounding a world-view beyond formal religious and philosophical
boundaries, a way of seeing as *homo religiosus* that paradoxically frees one from dogma and
illuminates one's own deepest religious intuitions. This way of seeing exposes *nirvana* in
samsara and *samsara* in *nirvana* (perhaps best translated as perfection in imperfection, or more

poetically, “the Pure Land” in *Sheol*, and visa-versa) in a vision of “suchness” that is self-transforming.

The founder of the Kyoto tradition was Nishida Kitaro (1870-1945), perhaps Japan’s greatest philosopher, an original thinker who has been compared to seminal philosophers East and West. His thought was nurtured and took root in the last years of the Japanese Meiji period (1868-1912), during which study of Western ideas in Japan was in vogue, indeed encouraged. This early period in his life was also a time when the elite of Japan had become fascinated with Christianity. Thus Nishida had been introduced thoroughly to both Western philosophy and the Christian faith as he matured into adulthood. Nishida came to prominence in his forties and fifties while he was professor of philosophy at Kyoto Imperial University. Retiring from his post at Kyoto in 1927, he continued to publish prolifically and to serve as National Teacher of Japan and to the Imperial Court. These later writings maintained Nishida as Japan’s preeminent thinker until he died in Tokyo in 1945 as Allied bombs hailed down upon his beloved nation.

The primary figures in this school include Tanabe Hajime, Nishitani Keiji, Himatsu Shin’ichi, Takeuchi Yoshonri, Abe Maseo and Ueda Shizeru. Although Nishida was their teacher, these men did not always agree with Nishida. Regardless, Nishida was unusually generous in his support of even their disagreement as he encouraged their careers. D. T. Suzuki was to say after Nishida’s death that, while a biography of Nishida would be a good thing, nothing could capture the “purity of heart” and centered personality of the man. Needless to say, he made an indelible impact on the lives of those who knew him best.

D. T. Suzuki was Nishida’s closest friend and played a priestly role in the Kyoto School, in that he, unlike the others mentioned, was not a disciple of Nishida’s. In fact Suzuki was much more explicitly and fundamentally a proponent of Zen, more missionary

than conversation partner with the West. Even that distinction is not quite fair, in that Suzuki surely entered into dialogue with the West, but his most profound contribution may have been his ability to translate Zen for the Western mind. Nishida and the primary members of the Kyoto school have been more interested in expressing a vision rooted in Zen, utilizing the terminology and methodology of Western philosophy and theology. The audience of the Kyoto School was specifically the intellectual elite of Japan and various prominent Western thinkers. (For instance, Einstein and Nishida were correspondents for many years. With Nishida's endorsement, Einstein visited Japan in 1922.)

Although Zen insight was the foundation of his work, Nishida himself gave up formal Zen practice fairly early in his life, while Suzuki became a true Zen master. They agreed on many things and Suzuki served to remind the Kyoto School of the subtle influence of an old tradition which stood along side of Zen, but was perceived as less sophisticated, a peasant faith, that of Shin, or Pure Land Buddhism.²³ Thus the Kyoto school has been formed by both these expressions of faith beyond understanding, Zen and Shin. In this brief overview I will address primarily the vision of Nishida in that it shaped all that was to follow in the Kyoto school. Each of the above mentioned writers, to varying degrees, inform this paper, especially Nishitani, Abe, and Suzuki. However, it is Nishida who has provided a hermeneutic for me for nearly ten years and in him I find interconnection with all I have said in the dissertation as well as the film. Perhaps I can sum up this hermeneutic in Nishida's statement, "the world grounded in absolute love is not a world of mutual censure... in such a dimension every value can be conceived of from the creative standpoint, for creativity always arises from love."²⁴ Nishida, for me, has been a "true teacher."

Thomas Merton exclaimed in a private journal entry of January 24, 1966, “N(ishida) is the one philosopher to whom I respond the most.”²⁵ Later, writing in an article on Nishida, Merton remarked, “...some knowledge of existential phenomenology may serve as a preparation”²⁶ for reading Nishida (this would go as well for reading any of the Kyoto masters). In fact, Edmund Husserl and Nishida were in continuous communication throughout their respective professional lives. They exchanged students as well as extended letters of conversation. It is said that the only picture on Husserl’s desk the day he died was that of Nishida Kitaro.

Nonetheless, Nishidian philosophy is more than phenomenology, although it is sometimes expressed in similar terms. There is something uniquely insightful, delightfully simple, and still yet unbearably complex, in Nishida. In the same vein, Nishidian thought as presented by the Kyoto school, although it has been self-identified as a philosophy of religion, neither attempts to promote religion nor to pose an alternative to religion. To Nishida, formal religion was of secondary consequence to the visionary understanding that, in the terminology of Zen, “Suchness,” everything as it is, is the truth.

The Kyoto school aims to provide a non-sectarian hermeneutic for a clear, unstained, vision of reality as such; a “double aperture” utilizing Western philosophy and theology interpreted through the lens of Zen and Shin. Consequently, reality is not the product of a subjective mind, but rather ultimate reality is Thinking. Thinking itself is never clearly experienced insofar as the conscious self sees itself as primary, independent, separate, or seminal. “Every subjectivistic interpretation, by taking its point of departure from an abstractly imagined, pre-existent conscious self, beclouds our vision.”²⁷ Nishida said in many references that, although he had given his life to communicating a vision, his words, like a

finger pointing at the moon, were merely pointers, and inadequate at that. From this effort of modesty and brilliance a school of thought emerged. What was the effort; the argument?

Quoting David Dilworth in the Introduction to Nishida's Last Writings,

Nishida's argument, in a nutshell is as follows: The biological world is continuous, on one end, with the physical world and, on the other end, with the human-historical world. In other respects it is its own matrix (*basbo*) of self-transformation.... Each pulsation of life is a unique vector of the biological system.²⁸

This *basbo* is similar to Plato's "receptacle," but not identical. Rather the *basbo* is a metaphor of consciousness with a certain implication of "place."²⁹ *Basbo* is the place of self-transformation. This is a transformation, or perhaps more accurately, a realization, which transcends "Self-power." "Self-power" is a Shin Buddhist term coined by the Shin saint Shinran.³⁰ One is transformed when one, in the terms of Dogen, studies the self by forgetting the self. This is not an achievement, but rather a process of embracing, trusting, "Other-power."³¹ This Other-power is beyond *self*-control. Recognizing this is recognizing what the Shin Buddhists call the grace of Amida. How does one attain this gracious awareness? One cannot. It is pure gift; thus the term, "the effortless acceptance of the infinite grace of Amida."³² This gift is always present in the *basbo* of transformation, the ultimate *basbo* which is the place of Absolute Nothingness...*sunyata*: original purity, purity of heart, preconscious awareness that sees all, but cannot see the self. Being Unstained. As the Voice from the Throne says in Revelation 21, "See! It has already happened. I AM the Beginning and the End (author's translation)." The *basbo* is Now.

For Nishida, reality is always self-contradictory. Form is formless. Light is dark. Many are One. The dénouement of the argument is always a *double negation* such as this argument closer straight from Nagarjuna, the founding saint of Mahayana (the Buddhist philosophical tradition from which Zen developed),³³ "All things lack entitihood since

change is perceived. There is nothing without entity because all things have emptiness.”³⁴

Neti, neti... not this, not that.

For the Kyoto tradition the paradox that in the act of speaking one betrays the truth was never far from their mind. Nishida's solution to the conundrum, derived from the Mahayana scriptures, is never to do away with opposing terms, never to consolidate opposites, no sublation. Sublation is death to thesis and antithesis. Rather, Nishida's vision transcends contradiction, ignoring the law of non-contradiction as the basis of unity. He lets the opposition live. He leaves the tension in the string. Identity itself is contradictory. Is this dialectic? Nishida and the Kyoto Masters respond with a resounding no. Ha Tai Kim, in an article initially published in Philosophy East and West entitled “The Logic of Illogical: Zen and Hegel,” perhaps explicates this key point most clearly.

What really distinguishes Zen from the dialectic of Hegel may be found in its thoroughgoing contradiction included in the antimony. In Hegel, the antimony is sublated.... But Zen asserts the identity of the antimony.... In this process, the unitive power is assumed, and it is Nothing.³⁵

As Nishida says in Last Writings,

We always possess ourselves in something that transcends ourselves in our own bottomless depths; we affirm ourselves through our own self-negation.... Zen's principle of the absurd is not merely irrational.... It is a form of the contradictory identity of the universal and particular, of knowing and acting. It has a structure no different than that of scientific cognition.³⁶

The Kyoto School aims to speak the unspeakable, *anyway*. Like the *point vierge* of Flaherty camera, the Kyoto School points to that silence before the first word, *silentium laude*, the darkness of Nothing that contains the seed of Everything, this womb of infinite mercy in which all things are made new in every moment.

When we think we know something, there is something we do not know.

The unknown is always behind the known...

the inevitable and necessary companion to every act of cognition.

Ignorance is to be enlightened. This involves a great contradiction....

Daisetz T. Suzuki, in Essays in Zen Buddhism

So it is that those who love and believe in God
without knowing God are the ones who best know God.

Nishida Kitaro, An Inquiry into the Good

Maybe there is something to it.

Father Matthew Kelty, Monk of Gethsemani

CHAPTER 4

Sunyata

~

God as 'dazzling darkness' is equivalent to *sunyata*....

Abe Maseo, Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue

True fullness seems empty,
yet it cannot be exhausted.

(chapter 45)³⁷

Tao Te Ching of Lao Tzu

The teaching of the North was its immensity,
its vast simplicity, its clarity and purity...
of a mysterious, mystical beauty.

~

Love's method is surrender,
giving up of the self
to that which is
greater than the self....

Frances Hubbard Flaherty, The Odyssey of a Film-Maker

While we gazed...
the snow smoke settled down
and the middle distance resolved itself
into paralleling threads that wound and twisted around
a sweep of ice whose far horizon was a landless rim....

Robert Flaherty, My Eskimo Friends

Sunyata.³⁸ A word with which, perhaps, both Robert and Frances Flaherty could identify. Essentially, it is a word that connotes openness, everything, nothing. *Emptiness* is one translation, but it is emptiness that is not empty in the usual Western sense. It is the *mu*, the emptiness of fullness that is derived from the logic of Nagarjuna, the classic *prajnaparamita*³⁹ literature which so confounds traditional Western philosophers. In the term *sunyata* we find the core Mahayana Buddhist teaching.⁴⁰

Zen missionary D. T. Suzuki defines it in many ways, but it all has to do with a radical way of seeing reality. This is a way of experiencing the world from the point of view of what is often described as "egolessness." The term "egolessness" is confusing in

itself because Western definitions of ego tend toward the Freudian and therefore, psychological, in the sense of a conscious-unconscious duality. In Zen, Emptiness is defined as “no mind.” No mind is One Mind.⁴¹ Suzuki cites the seminal Buddhist text, The Diamond Sutra of the Buddha, which is presented in the form of a repetitive and logically contradictory dialogue between Buddha and his beloved disciple, Subhuti. Buddha tells Subhuti that at a time when he was being tortured, he felt no ill will toward his tormentors due to his “no-mind” or single focus.⁴²

“It is not the Unconscious in its usual psychological sense... but probably in the sense of the ‘abysmal ground’ of the medieval mystics or of the Divine Will even before its utterance of the Word,” asserts Suzuki.⁴³ *Sunyata* is the word before the Word. The word before the Word both interpenetrates and transcends space and time. No-mind is the “place” and *sunyata* is *Now*. “No-mind” is the presentation of *sunyata* in the sense of “purity of heart” or primal innocence. Dogen Eihei, quoting his teacher, Tiantong, said simply, “One word. Precisely.”⁴⁴ *Sunyata* is just “this” or “thus.” *Sunyata* contains all things just as they are. *Sunyata* judges not.

Among many fascinating stories about Robert Flaherty is one that stands out in this sense of nonjudgmental, innocent wisdom. Film director John Huston and Robert Flaherty had been out on the town in New York. As Huston hailed a cab, he was accosted by a knife-wielding assailant. The assailant had been offended by Huston’s arrogant manner as he had stepped in front of the man in stopping the taxi. A switchblade pressed against Huston’s chin as the man declared his intention to slit Huston’s throat. Flaherty, approaching the scene, politely asked the young man what he was doing with the knife. The would-be murderer replied that Huston had used a racial slur. Flaherty told him to put down the knife and when the man shifted his weight,

Huston knocked him down and the knife fell from his hands. Flaherty reprimanded Huston for hitting the “little man” and helped the fellow to his feet. He then picked up the knife and asked him what he thought he had been doing. The young man said that Huston was a bigot and he had planned to kill him. Flaherty was astonished and assured the man that Huston was no racial bigot. Whereupon Flaherty hailed another taxicab and dropped both men off at their respective destinations, but not before establishing a bit of personal rapport with the mugger and suggesting that he get home before the police picked him up for being under the influence of drugs.

Huston was to comment later,

I have heard from men who have worked with him about Bob’s wonderful ways with... people, how he could step into a critical, sometimes dangerous, situation and resolve the conflict through... sympathy and understanding. I can well believe this, having been present at a demonstration of these powers.⁴⁵

“Bob’s wonderful ways with people,” was how John Huston described this gift of nonjudgmental innocence. Frances Flaherty called it love. “Robert Flaherty never made a love story... but out of his camera... love came of itself, love extraordinary, so that John Houseman could say of his films, ‘They are rooted in love.’”⁴⁶

What is it to love the world? This term *sunyata* provides a clue and may contribute something to our understanding of Robert Flaherty. He taught not teaching. He had a system that was no system, his school is no school, his seeing is not seeing, as an artist he merged with the object of his focus in a pure act of identity. The acclaimed French director Jean Renoir said of him,

There will be no Flaherty School. Many people will try to imitate him, but they won’t succeed; he had no system. His system was just to love the world, to love humanity, to love animals, and love is something you cannot teach.⁴⁷

Nishida said of love, "...love is the power by which we grasp ultimate reality. Love is the deepest knowledge of things. ...we can reach reality only through love."⁴⁸ Love, for Nishida, was the immersion of the (ego) self into the other until there is no space between self and other. "The more we discard the self... the greater and deeper our love becomes. We advance (from love of parents, children, spouse, to friends) and from there to the love of humankind... (and beyond) to birds, beasts, grasses and trees."⁴⁹ There is no artificial dichotomy between knowing and loving. "To know is to love and to love is to know."⁵⁰ Inferentially, what we see is what we know and to know is to love. What we see becomes, in union of seer and seen, a unique creation. To really see is to love. To really see is to know.

This "bottomless compassion" is perceived on a "field of nihility" which is *sunyata*.⁵¹ *Sunyata* is an affirmation of Reality by identifying one's true self as one with the other. To be religious is not merely an exercise in piety. True religion, according to the masters of the Kyoto School is the complete identification with Reality itself which is fathomless, absolutely full of images and action within the fundamental context of Emptiness. (This union is sometimes described in terms of "self-negation"⁵² in the sense of "the falling away of mind and body"⁵³ as described in the writings of Dogen Eihei.)

Nishitani conveys this union in the realization of emptiness in terms comprehensible to the Western mindset, "'All are One' signifies the 'world' as the unifying order... of all that is. The world then, is nothing but the gathering together of that 'being.' (This possibility) can only be constituted on a field of *sunyata*."⁵⁴ Masao Abe, referencing Nagarjuna, defined this Emptiness as "...not non-being, but 'wondrous Being.' Precisely because it is Emptiness which 'empties' even emptiness, true Emptiness is absolute Reality which makes all phenomena...truly *be*."⁵⁵ *Sunyata* is, then, the

Emptiness that empties even emptiness into “wondrous Being.” What better “image” for the art of Robert and Frances Flaherty?

Our task in life is to discover that which is extraordinary
in the most ordinary, mundane things.
The object of our spiritual quest may be right here before us,
if only we have eyes to see.
Taitetsu Unno, Shin Buddhism

CHAPTER 5

Wondrous Being

~

The master observes the world
but trusts his inner vision.
He allows things to come and go.
His heart is as open as the sky.
(12)

See the world as your self.
Have faith in the way things are.
Love the world as yourself;
then you can care for all things.
(13)

Tao Te Ching of Lao Tzu

The intricate calibrations of synthesis are transcended by the exquisite philosophical *tour de force* of Nagarjuna. His Mulamadhyamakakarika pushes dialectic to what seems a complete and absurd negation to Western sensibilities. As previously cited, it is this philosophy that formed the cornerstone of the Mahayana Buddhist canon.⁵⁶

Informed by and infused with Chinese Taoist and Confucian influences (especially the writings attributed to Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu), out of Mahayana, emerged the revolutionary *Chan* schools which later took the name *Zen* in thirteenth century Japan. Zen is an abbreviation of *zazen* which is, essentially, “sitting quietly and doing nothing.”⁵⁷ Thus, the very “quietism” implied in the term initiated a split in the Zen tradition.

The division has manifested itself in many ways over hundreds of years. Rather than belabor the complex religio-political wars of Zen over the past eight hundred years, it may suffice here to say that Soto Zen emphasizes sitting (in meditation) as the actual expression of enlightenment. Sitting *is* enlightenment. Rinzai Zen, founded by Eisai, who brought his teaching to Japan in 1191, claims Lin Chi (Rinzai in Japanese) in the ninth century as the founding inspiration, and honors Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch of

Chan in eighth century China as the embodiment of the true (living) Zen way as expressed in the *prajnaparamita* literature back to Nagarjuna.

It is also expressed more simply as the “gradual enlightenment” (Soto) school, emphasizing “practice,” versus the “sudden enlightenment” (Rinzai) school, emphasizing *koan* study. The differences were expressed more radically by disciples of the initiating protagonists than the original arguments might have been expected to have produced. In a word, the dividing issues may rightfully appear insignificant to the casual observer.

The term *sunyata* is common to both schools, but *sunyata* as emptiness has a central place in Rinzai (sudden enlightenment). The Kyoto School has been profoundly influenced by Rinzai, although the Soto founder Dogen is often referenced, especially in his primary opus *Shobogenzo*, in English, sometimes translated, The Secret Treasury of the True Dharma Eye. Suzuki’s Zen: The Doctrine of No Mind is a treatise on Huineng’s defining Sutra and autobiography which are seminal treatises of Rinzai Zen.⁵⁸

The importance for this study of Huineng is his emphasis on the immediate perception of reality as it is without judgment. Huineng’s innocent/wise second naiveté⁵⁹ has been compared to that of Jesus.⁶⁰ Suzuki, commenting on Huineng’s simplicity (Huineng was a woodcutter), likens this purity of heart to Jesus, an unschooled carpenter, arguing with the intellectuals, keeping them at bay with his piercing deconstruction of ancient texts. “It is a fact that the religious genius does not need as much help from knowledge and intellection as from the richness of the inner life.”⁶¹

Suzuki’s thought was influenced greatly by the teachings of three great teachers in the Zen tradition: Huineng, Chou-chou, the Zen master of great compassion, and also of Lin Chi.⁶² Lin Chi’s pedagogical method was audacious and confusing to those who did not catch on quickly. He (actually!) pushed his students to see what was right before

them. Reflecting a familiarity with the sermons of the Taoist master, Chuang Tzu, he spoke of a “True Man of No Rank” or “Real Person” who, in the words of Lin Chi’s English language translator, Burton Watson, “(is) a person with genuine understanding of...the Way, and here stands for the Buddha nature inherent in all.... (H)e urges...his audience to... concentrate on what he calls ‘this lone brightness without fixed shape or form’ that is within them at this very moment.”⁶³ Indeed, Lin Chi says of the True Person, “He goes everywhere, wandering through many lands... yet he never becomes separated from his single thought. Every place for him is clean and pure....”⁶⁴ Where? Who? “...this lone brightness before my eyes now.”⁶⁵

This lone brightness is the very essence of *sunyata*. This wondrous Being is in reality no being, but a light shining in the darkness that cannot be extinguished.

Although my eyes filled with blind passion
 Cannot see the light that embraces me,
 Great Compassion ceaselessly
 Illuminates my darkness.
Shinran, Hymns of the Pure Land

CHAPTER 6

A Rare Eye

~

I remember the miserable weeks
he just sat on our veranda with every thought falling away....
This, some people call “the creative void,” the fertile state of no-mind.
This I call “nonpreconception,” the beginning of discovery.

Frances Hubbard Flaherty

(lecture notes)

He was a hard man to fault.
As a rule, there is something inhuman about people
you can't find anything wrong with,
but this doesn't go for Bob;
he was human above everything else.
I think he was just a little more human than
almost anybody else I ever knew.

John Huston, in Robert J. Flaherty: A Biography

I don't see where he fits into films at all,
except being one of the two or three greatest people
who ever worked in the medium.

Orson Welles, in Robert J. Flaherty: A Biography

He lent us his vision,
and he had a rare eye for beauty.
...above all, he knew that there lives,
indeed, the dearest freshness deep down...
in you and me and people rich and poor, educated or not.
He sought to feed that freshness, using the common language of the eye.

Charles Siepmann, in Robert J. Flaherty: A Biography

Nonpreconception. Maybe there is something to it after all. Frances was sometimes conflicted about using the term to describe the “rare eye.” How do you say, in one word, what it was about this eye that was unique?

Nonpreconception in light of *sunyata* underscores the mystery of the Flaherty oeuvre. In this alchemy of terminology we are presented with an unsynthesized paradox: in the logic of the Kyoto masters, a paradox unresolved, nonetheless, a unifying expression beyond words pointing to “more than this”: a *koan*.

Sunyata is, at the last, the emptiest of terms. All it can ever “mean” is “just this.”

What is reality? Just this. What is truth? Just this. What is meaning itself? Just this.

And what is beauty? Just this. Just look.

Thomas Merton took a stab at defining the indefinable in his author’s note to his classic, Zen and the Birds of Appetite, written with D. T. Suzuki,

Zen enriches no one. There is no body to be found. The birds may come and circle for awhile in the place it is thought to be. But they soon go elsewhere. When they are gone, the ‘nothing’, the ‘nobody’ that was there, suddenly appears. It was there all the time, but the scavengers missed it, because it was not their kind of prey.⁶⁶

“Nothing” in Zen is not nothing as often interpreted, implying a certain nihilism. Nihilism is sometimes presented pejoratively in Western philosophy. By association, as well as by definition, emptiness and nothingness are not typically taken as terms of enlightenment in strictly rational systems. Zen sees differently. (Nishitani Keiji wrote a provocative treatise on the contrast between Western nihilism and Zen, published in book form as The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism, translated into English by Graham Parkes and Setsuko Aihara, see bibliography.)

In Merton’s last speech, on the day he died, he concluded by proclaiming that the “purpose of life is to live by love.”⁶⁷ Thus, to die without having loved is to miss the point, like the birds of appetite. Living by love, one identifies with the world, its people places and things, and in solidarity with them finds “this lone brightness” right in front of us. It was always there, but we were looking for something else. Lin Chi admonished students to stop “circling” and really *see*! This “stopping and seeing” recreates the world. When all else fails just stop. And see.

Embodying insight, Robert Flaherty vivified the ancient Chan text Mo-ho Chih-kuan (The Great Stopping and Seeing). In his encounter of the “lone brightness” in the vast white light of the North he saw something that no other Euro-American had bothered to see. Robert Flaherty apparently perceived something there beyond the daily drudgery of survival.⁶⁸ With the psalmist (Psalm 139), even darkness was light to him. In the icy crucible that was the North, awakening, he opened his eyes on eternity. He was gifted with a rare eye, indeed. What he saw changed everything. Still, in the dark, final, days of his life, this heretofore boundlessly intrepid spirit could not find a healing vision in the future of making movies for the money alone. Creative integrity was hard-wired into his character. His cinematic opportunities limited to travelogues and Cinerama, illness, age, and loss of creative purpose took their toll. There would be no more films.

He had seen a great light and followed it to the ends of the earth. Unlike the birds of prey, he saw what had been there all the time. Like a *bodhisattva*⁶⁹ who has experienced enlightenment and returns to *be the light* for others, Robert Flaherty transmitted the great gift of “a rare eye for beauty.” Frances Flaherty summed up what *she* had seen in a word. Nonpreconception: the dazzling darkness of “*Sunyata*.” Emptiness full and running over. The “wondrous Being.” “This lone brightness.” Just this.

Here is the “way” of the camera...:
Through its sensitivity to movement
it can take us into a new dimension of seeing,
through the mysterious rhythmic impulses
of life and love take us inward into the spirit,
into the unity of the spirit.

Frances Hubbard Flaherty, Odyssey of a Film-Maker

CHAPTER 7

“True Man of No Rank”

~

...the only condition necessary for this state of self-surrender is the present moment
which is the soul, light as a feather, fluid as water, innocent as a child,
respond(ing) to every moment of grace like a floating balloon.

Jean-Pierre DeCaussade, The Sacrament of the Present Moment

What we venerate in the Saints, beyond and above what we know is this secret:
the mystery of an innocence and of an identity perfectly hidden...

they are in no category, they are peculiarly *themselves*.

Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude

Here in this lump of red flesh is a True Man of No Rank.

Constantly he goes in and out of your face.

If there are any who do not know this for a fact,
then look! Look!

Lin Chi, Lin-chi ch'an an-shih yulu

Now we have our brief moment here.

We came yesterday, are here today, will be gone tomorrow.

Let that brief moment be spent
in communion with the whole of life
so that we will not have lived in vain.

Matthew Kelty, OCSO, The Call of the Wild Geese

In order to demonstrate the Flaherty approach I attach to this document a brief film which was shot in July of 2004 at the Abbey of Gethsemani, near Bardstown, Kentucky. Nearly twelve hours of film was produced during my stay there, about eight hours of which consist of discussions and interviews with Father Matthew Kelty, OCSO. Before presenting the detailed account of the experience which will conclude this chapter, it is appropriate to begin by establishing a connection between the film and the written portion of the project. Therefore, in a closer study of the Flaherty vision, what follows should provide background for understanding the choice of subject and the particular approach to the subject that is intended to be demonstrated by the inclusion of this brief film segment.

If the Flaherty “eye” has been effectively referenced in the actual filmmaking process, the reader/viewer should be able to identify the method within the body of the film itself. The following discussion of relevant issues relating to the Flaherty films should thereby assist the reader/viewer in noting the Flaherty influence.

~

The star of Flaherty’s masterpiece, Nanook of the North, was a man Robert Flaherty admired. Nanook is portrayed sympathetically, in scenes depicting experiences Flaherty had witnessed or at least had heard about from Nanook. Clearly, Nanook had moments of self-consciousness and awareness of the camera. Yet the finest moments of the film feature the “actors” doing what they instinctively knew to do, just being.

Nanook was a legitimate innocent, despite his fascination with play-acting for the exotic machine that somehow captured his image and, by some incredible alchemy, created dream shadows on the frozen igloo wall. The beauty of Nanook that transcends time and trend is grounded in the profound ordinariness with which he and his family confront the challenge of living: Nothing special and yet uniquely transparent. One sees through Nanook to something else. What is it? Perhaps it is the innocence of a man-child of spirit and light; innocence and wisdom paradoxically fused.

Though the film was directed by Robert Flaherty and presented recreations of prior, actual, and sometimes imagined, events, this picture has an authenticity that few movies of the era could claim. It was akin to street theater, in that it allowed the drama to unfold naturally within a general theme without the interference of a lot of directing and without the complication of a formal script.

True enough, Nanook had not killed a seal with a spear in many years. Normally, he used a rifle. Nonetheless, this was a way known to him, passed down through the

generations. The tug of war with the seal was within the story line, but the effort and struggle were real. The experience was not unknown or foreign to these people. Flaherty had seen it before in those parts and so had they. The seal really died and they skinned it, feasting on the blubber.

Is this “documentary?” By the terms of that documentary approach sometimes called *cinema verite*, the Flahertys’ work was more and less, similar and different. That is, Flaherty films, in the choice of subjects and the reverence with which they treated both camera and topic reflect an innocent eye in full focus in search of something true in the commonplace of people making a life out of the beauty and terror of environment. Frances and Robert Flaherty, searching for deeper truth, asked questions with the camera within the context of memory. This memory may stand in tension with the sense of absolute objectivity which has been sometimes inferred from the term nonpreconception.

The films of the Flahertys’ friend and admirer John Grierson are primary works in what Frances Flaherty called “...the documentary movement that has spread all over the world... preconceived for social and educational purposes.”⁷⁰ Grierson’s own definition of the term has held up over time as one standard by which “documentary film” has been determined: “the creative treatment of actuality.”⁷¹ How is this “creative treatment of actuality” different from the Flaherty approach?

Grierson himself provides a clue in his encomium to *Nanook*. “Many years before, Ponting had made his famous picture of the Scott expedition to the South Pole... but here (in *Nanook*) the sketch came to life and the journalistic survey turned to drama.”⁷² “The sketch came to life” indeed. Certainly *Nanook* was a “creative treatment of reality,” but what *was* it about? In *Nanook*, the “documentary” came to life and the newsreel turned to drama. What Robert Flaherty saw was unique. Grierson describes it as

deriving from “the theory that the camera has an affection for the spontaneous and traditional.”⁷³ Iaian Hamilton perhaps says it as well as anyone,

Flaherty has pitched away the last mechanics of prose, and the result is pure poetry. With the clear true vision of a child, Flaherty contemplates place, people, animal and machine; and the lyrical intensity of his art evolves a slow statement of the marvel of life. How inadequate is the word ‘documentary’ to describe such a work. It is like calling an ode ‘an article in verse.’⁷⁴

Poetry. Contemplation. Lyrical intensity. That these are also sometimes present in contemporary documentary is tribute to the person who took documentary from propaganda and commentary to art. Iaian Hamilton elaborates, commenting on Louisiana Story,

There is no comment, no propaganda.... The actions of these people, as Virginia Woolf once wrote of Homeric characters, ‘seem laden with beauty because they do not know they are beautiful.’ In every sequence where human beings are under the lens love is evoked.... How sane this is, how sane and calm... the very essence of romanticism.... Here, from a remote corner of a remote state, is Flaherty showing us the true world, the source—and it is bathed, like the work of any true poet, in ‘the master light of our seeing.’⁷⁵

Frances called Robert “a mystic of the modern age.”⁷⁶ As a mystic Flaherty would indeed be in legendary company. Again we have a question of definition. What is a “mystic” and how to be one in an age of science, technology and deconstruction?

The term “mystic” has romantic implications. We may commonly think of a serene person living in a cottage in the forest, dreaming dreams. Hermits, monks and cloistered nuns may come to mind. Yet, ironically, monks are often the most active of people, living in close community without much free time or privacy. “Mystic” does however refer to the idea of mystery, the reality of that which is not evident. Mystics are everywhere, anywhere, as prevalent in the city as the cloister. In Father Matthew Kelty’s

blessing, written for me at the time of my ordination as a Christian minister, we find a profound statement of the *mystery of faith* in one luminous phrase as he concludes with gusto, “Happens all the time. Anyhow. Anywhere. Subtle hints: ‘There is more than this.’ There sure is. Praise God. Amen. Alleluia.”

More than this. This affirmation reflects the implicit mystery in the statement of *faith* found in the epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 1, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (RSV). One who lives in such faith, who penetrates the surface of life, for Father Matthew, is a true mystic. This theme is a consistent refrain in his nightly homily at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky: every person of faith is a bit of a mystic.

In Lincoln’s First Inaugural Address, he refers to the “mystic chords of memory”⁷⁷ that bind together time and place, those memories that connect us, unify us, through poetry, literature, music, art, oral and written histories, family traditions, folkways, and expressions of the spirit. The “mystic chords of memory” celebrate life and love. Perhaps such mystic chords called to the Flahertys.

Matthew Kelty is catholic with a small c. Consequently, faith, for him, is not a formula, but a *way of seeing*. A “mystic” then is someone who sees more than the obvious, someone who has entered into full communion with life itself. By this definition, Robert Flaherty was a mystic of a high order.

“Modern times” themselves have passed away to be succeeded by postmodern times (succeeded presently by times as yet unnamed, but reflecting a sense of “bardo,” the Tibetan term referring to an interval between time and space, a place of waiting anxiously for the next bus out; a time and place where we wait in mournful hope for Godot). The avatars of postmodernism, the “deconstructionists,” questioned the very

Word. In the process of deconstruction the light is shined on what is not said, what is not mentioned, what is not privileged: “More than this.”

Given these considerations, it may not be hyperbole to assert that Robert Flaherty is a mystic for our own time. He showed us without comment, without propaganda, what was not evident but nonetheless real. The four primary Flaherty films, (Nanook, Moana, Man of Aran, Louisiana Story), illumined the silver screen with the brightness of “more than this.” The Flahertys showed us that the film medium was more than a tool for molding thought, although they were both remarkable teacher in their respective ways. They showed us that film was more than diversion, although Robert Flaherty himself was a masterful entertainer. They took us to places we would not have gone otherwise, introduced us to people who had heretofore been invisible, cultures that seemed impenetrable, and most of all, they showed us life, love, and mystic beauty right before our eyes in the lone brightness of the silver screen.

Was it documentary? Certainly it can be said that the Flahertys developed a style, but in doing so, influenced all of film, including documentary. Was this way of filmmaking appropriately described as “nonpreconception?” We do know that there was “conception.” Something was born in this work.

Thus the paradox: something born but not preconceived. Implied in the paradox is a sense of timelessness. Who knows *when* creation begins? The psalmist in Psalm 139 cries out, “You know me intimately; my frame was not hidden from you when I was being created in mystery, intricately woven in the depths. Your eyes looked upon my substance before it was formed...” (author’s translation). The mystery is summed up in a Hebrew word, *golmi*, translated here as “unformed substance.” Since this is the only use of the term in the Hebrew bible, a clear Hebrew-to-English translation is complicated.

Apparently, from context, it is that “stuff” out of which life is “intricately woven.”

Where does it begin? In the case of the genius of Robert and Frances Flaherty, all we can know is out of the womb of memory and dreams unfolded magnificent new creations.

Encountering Zen at the end of her life, Frances Flaherty was working out a new formula for discussing the Flaherty method. The ancient Sanskrit term *sunyata*, borrowed by Buddhists and Zen masters from ancient Indian mystics, may enhance the term nonpreconception in defining the innocence, openness, and true faith that provided the source, the *golmi*, of inspiration.

The eye that the psalmist described looked courageously into the abyss and saw that it was good. John D. Caputo, in Against Ethics, writes,

A man or woman of faith is not one who knows nothing of the abyss, but has looked down this abyss and construed it in terms of the traces and stirrings of a loving hand.... Faith is a matter of a radical hermeneutic, an art of construing shadows.⁷⁸

Nonpreconception was never meant to convey the idea of objectivity *ex nihilo*.

Nonetheless, the term conveys in a postmodern formula the mystic eye with which Robert Flaherty dreamed dreams and made pictures. Nonpreconception is the art of construing light and shadow.

CHAPTER 8

Priest of Salem

~

When one is united to the core of another,
to speak of that is to breathe the name *hu*,
empty of self and filled with love.

As the saying goes,
"The pot drips what is in it."

Jelaluddin Rumi, Divani Shamsi Tabriz

This "King Melchizedek of Salem, Priest of God Most High..."
whose very name means wholeness, whose homeland is Peace,
whose god is beyond images and words.... See how great he is!
...without genealogy, having neither the beginning of days or the end of life,
an incarnation of the Eternal Spirit, he remains a priest forever.

the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 7

(adapted and translated by the author)

A *myokonin* in the Pure Land tradition is a simple, yet wise, one who claims no
formal training or great intellect, but whose very life is charged with deep meaning.⁷⁹

This is Father Matthew Kelty, OCSO, Monk of Gethsemani-- priest, preacher, editor,
hermit, peace activist, weaver, motorcyclist, world citizen, mystic and embodiment of
compassion.

Whatever I say about Matthew Kelty will be too much, and still, too little.
Sometimes, however, at the outskirts of language we find ourselves unable to
communicate in any other way than by an expression, an act, a dance, a song, maybe a
picture, a film. Matthew is my Nanook. He has been a teacher, a father, a brother, a
priest confessor, a model, a spiritual guide. In and through all of these roles, he has been
a soul friend. My film is about him, but in a profound sense, my life and work have
become about him as well. That is one reason Nanook of the North moves me so
deeply. I see Flaherty losing himself in Nanook, never to be the same.

There are two ways I want to approach describing my experience of Matthew Kelty, thus sparing the reader from long-winded tales and sentimental stories. Thereby allowing the reader to be a viewer and letting the camera (and Matthew) do the talking. First, in order to establish my own placement in this narrative, I will quote Nishitani Keiji, a student and friend of Nishida Kitaro who honored his teacher in a book titled modestly, Nishida Kitaro.

It is altogether possible for someone else to be closer to one than one is to oneself. To have been given the opportunity... to encounter someone nearer to me than I was myself I consider one of the greatest blessings and joys of my life. Such an experience brings one to an awareness of oneself by reflecting onto an external mirror elevated far above one's actual self... to meet a teacher in the genuine sense of the word—one who invites you to ascend the mountain path that turns out to be the way that leads you to yourself—is rare good fortune.⁸⁰

Rare good fortune indeed. Abram had such good fortune in Genesis 14. Abram had experienced some success, but, in spite of trusting in divine promises, he had not yet seen much evidence of his promised destiny. Here he finds himself in the only military experience of his life. He had gone to battle with the kings who had captured his nephew Lot and Lot's entire household.

Without elaboration, the redactor tells us that Abram defeated the kings and was about to negotiate a peace when out of nowhere appeared a mysterious priest, Melchizedek, King of Salem (Jerusalem?), or Shalom. I am referencing Melchizedek here in order to illustrate similarities with Matthew, as well as to point out that Matthew's priesthood is anchored in a tradition that far predates the Roman Catholic Church and indeed is an expression of timeless preconscious awareness.

Melchizedek is mentioned three times in the Christian bible. He is referenced here, in Genesis, later in Psalm 110 when Melchizedek is cited as an example for the priest-king

David, and in the epistle to the Hebrews (5-7) as a typological model for Jesus Christ. Melchizedek does not actually do much in his biblical premiere, but in doing what he does he becomes a Judeo-Christian paradigm transcending epochs and culture. In essence, Melchizedek comes at the just the right time to bring refreshment and blessing to Abram. He brings bread and wine and blessing. The gifts are materially and sacramentally significant and the blessing profoundly poetic: "Blessed be Abram by *El-Elyon*, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be *El-Elyon* who has delivered your enemies into your hand." (author's translation) After accepting the bread and wine and receiving the blessing, Abram, who himself has foresworn any of the booty of his victory, allocates a tenth of what has been won in battle to the priest. We learn in Hebrews that Melchizedek had no beginning, no genealogy. He was, moreover, an outsider, a priest of the old god, *El-Elyon*, God Most High, the King of Gods.⁸¹

El-Elyon was an ancient Phoenician deity⁸² common to various Canaanite tribes, but who had been revealed to the Hebrews as *Yahweh*, the true and One God. *Yahweh* had been revealed to Abram prior to this episode, yet he accepts the blessing of the "pagan" priest of the old religion who would become the prototype for the priest-king, David, and the priest-king-messiah, Jesus Christ, responding in worship with an offering of a tenth of the prize. Evidently, Abram accepted this outsider as not only an appropriate messenger of God, but with great reverence.

Abram, meaning "Universal Parent (God) be praised" would soon become Abraham, "Father of Humanity," his wife Sarai, meaning "princess," would become Sarah, "Great Mother" (my translations). Abraham and Sarah would realize their improbable destiny and Melchizedek would disappear, only to return twice more at critical junctures of Judeo-Christian scriptural history.

In Matthew Kelty I have met “a teacher in the genuine sense of the word.” Like Melchizedek, he is a priest of the God beyond God of Pseudo-Dionysius, Meister Eckhart and Paul Tillich. This God of “dazzling darkness” unites Pseudo-Dionysius and the Kyoto master, Abe Maseo, who posits, “God as dazzling darkness is equivalent to *sunyata*.”⁸³ Matthew is a Christian, a Roman Catholic, and a priest of God Most High. He is also a *myokonin*. He brings bread, wine and blessing.

His faith transcends dogma but finds eloquent expression in the Catholic Mass. Against canon law of the Church, his table is open to all. Sinners and unbelievers have been mystically transformed into the Body of Christ by the bread and wine at this table. His self-presentation is as a simple priest/monk, a man of traditional faith. This very simplicity incorporates and accepts “the whole of life” in true catholicity. He is the classic “picaresque saint” in that he has an ornery sense of humor, seeing the absurd in everyday life and enjoying playing jokes. He loves to talk and is a great Irish storyteller. In this, he presents what I believe to be, in his own words, “an out.” That is, he gives the listener “an out” from hearing more than they are able. He also provides himself with “an out” from being a guru. Remarkably, what seems to be aimless conversation has an odd way of planting subliminal seeds that return to the careful listener.

One may suspect, from the latter comment, a bit of reading into otherwise straightforward discourse. Perhaps, like a Rorschach blot, we hear and see what we want, what we need. Once I told him about a “coincidence” when he had said and done what I needed without my prompting in any way obvious. His response was a chuckle and “Well, you got what you came for.”

He demonstrates what is meant by Zen masters who say, “Wait until I stop talking and then you will hear me.”⁸⁴ To me, he is Melchizedek from a place called Peace, the

priest bringing bread, wine, and blessing in time and beyond time. Finally, when one meets Father Matthew Kelty, one comes into the presence of a “True Man of No Rank.”

It brought joy to watch him watch Flaherty’s *Moana*. He lived many years with the people of the Papua New Guinea, and in the characters, rituals, and folkways portrayed in *Moana* he told me that he sensed a similar “purity of heart” and (ab)original innocence. In his own eyes I saw the eyes of a child light up at “this lone brightness” on the screen. Matthew has now seen *Moana*, *Nanook*, *Man of Aran*, *Louisiana Story*, *the Land*, and *Hidden and Seeking*. It seems to me, that Robert, Frances and “Charlie” (Charles Richard Kelty, Jr.) would get along fine. In spite of the fact that in those three we are considering very different and remarkable people who have taken differing paths, the one thing they may be said to share is “a way of seeing,” the True Dharma Eye.

CHAPTER 9

“Thank you, Father Louis, for a wonderful visit.”

~

The secret of *Nanook* lies, I believe,
in those two words, “being themselves.”

Not Acting, but Being.

Frances Hubbard Flaherty, The Odyssey of a Film-Maker

In confession to Father Matthew
...was talking about my resentment.

Thomas Merton
(from a journal entry)

My task was to film quicksilver. Matthew had been called “enthusiastic, but not emotionally stable enough”⁸⁵ to be considered a candidate for Abbot of Gethsemani by his friend, Thomas Merton, who nonetheless chose Matthew as his final confessor. There is no packaging or marketing Matthew Kelty. He is as open as a door in the breeze, but impossible to predict. Whence cometh the *pneuma*?

I had once talked to him about letting me interview him for a book in which we would collaborate, and that went nowhere. Now he seemed willing to let me capture him on film. After writing the Abbot of the Abbey of Gethsemani, I was graciously invited to stay as long as I wanted based on the Abbot’s statement that, “If Father Matthew wants to do it, it is all right with me.” I traveled by car to Kentucky in late June of 2004, taking four days to get there. I spent much of this road time in mental and spiritual preparation for the coming challenge. While I looked forward to spending time with Matthew, and he seemed to be very happy that I was coming, I was not sure what to expect when I got there. There were still outstanding issues of what and where I would be allowed to film, and how Matthew would actually accept his role as subject of a movie.

When I arrived at the Abbey I was taken out to a hermitage at the edge of the bean fields and otherwise enclosed by forest. The “Studio,” as it is called, is surrounded on

two sides by the forest and a short distance from a picturesque pond. It is called the studio because it was built by Brother Lavarans Nielsen, the renowned icon writer of Gethsemani, to be his artist studio. Lavarans and his friend, Brother Michael, built this lovely brick cottage with their own hands. There are windows and light coming in from all angles and the hermitage is built around a lush inner court garden. Tragically, Michael died in a fall from the roof during construction (dying on the Feast of Saint Michael) and Lavarans also met a sad end a few years later.

When people asked how I liked it out there by myself, I just told them that the ghosts kept me company. Some have shied away from the studio because of its remote location and its connection to monks who met untimely deaths. I actually enjoyed being there. It provided a great film location in a tranquil, quiet setting.

Soon after arriving, Matthew put me to work. He gave me his mornings for the next three weeks. He allowed, even encouraged, me to give him direction (actually, I flatter myself with the use of that term) and to set the pace. No topic was off the record, although he gave me a hard time when he preferred not to talk about something. Only once did he ask me to delete something, and then it was in reference to a deceased monk whose family may not have known the details of what he was telling me.

The Abbot had offered me complete freedom to film what I wanted as long as I did not disturb the peace. My basic tools were a digital minicam and a tripod, these being minimally intrusive.

Matthew and I have talked about a lot of things over the years and I hoped, like Flaherty with Nanook, to revisit some of these discussions while keeping the spark of spontaneity alight. I wanted him to be himself on camera. I invoked Robert and

Frances Flaherty and the True Dharma Eye. Not surprisingly, some conversations worked better than others.

We had a wonderful morning at Merton's hermitage not far from where I was staying. This was a place of memory for him and for me as well. He had spent many happy hours with Merton there, talking, maybe gossiping a little, hearing Merton's confession, and sometimes (clandestinely) listening to Bob Dylan and Joan Baez on the phonograph. I had stayed in the hermitage on a couple of occasions myself and it is always an extraordinary experience. As before, he conducted a Mass for me in Merton's tiny chapel. Only this time the camera was rolling. Later, we sat around the living room and talked in front of the fireplace. As we left Matthew looked up with a wry grin and said, "Thank you Father Louis for a wonderful visit." (Merton's monastic name was Father Louis). Later he told me that in the part of the Mass where the dead are remembered he had asked for Merton's blessing on our time together.

However, it was not my best film day. Matthew was 89 and, while he was still very active, I felt some responsibility for his care while we were out there. Furthermore, while he gave me virtual *carte blanche* in the project, he did not always give me time to set up. Out at Merton's, I was running from one room to another, worrying about sound, trying to introduce some touchy, personal topics and, what was worse, I tried to be in the film myself. In short, much of the film in the living room provides a sort of comic relief in comparison to the rest of the footage. The sound was bad, I looked hassled (I was), I was often unfocussed and at one point I spent the better part of fifteen minutes thumbing through a book to find a passage to which I had wanted Matthew to respond, all the while he was laughing and poking fun at me. It was not my best moment although

I will cherish it as a piece of unintentionally accurate documentation of the vitality our friendship.

Later on, I went back up there and shot a lot of film of the place. Many of Merton's personal items have recently been removed and sent to various archives. Even since I had stayed there, it had lost some of that sense that Merton might just come bounding into the room. Nonetheless, sitting at his desk, looking out the window at that spectacular view will always strike a "mystic chord of memory." Back out at the Studio, Matthew and I talked about everything, but I tried to keep quiet and out of the picture. On comfortable turf for me, I felt more in control. At least I was not always thinking about sound and light and other technical issues. I also set up one session in his office which worked pretty well. I got some great shots of this modest, cluttered, space that always seemed to me nonetheless, (in the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, a favorite of his) "charged with the grandeur of God." Since then he has cleaned out his office, discarding years of personal memories. He told me, "It was heartbreaking, but after I was finished I was refreshed. It felt like a good confession."

The film footage I have chosen to present as part of this project is about an hour long, only slightly edited, in which Matthew is especially comfortable and he talks about himself. While there is much left to edit, this piece of film will most likely be at the heart of any movie I produce from these sessions.

There are two issues of discussion that are unlikely be in my finished product, at least for now. One is on tape, but there is a strain in his voice and body language which I want to respect. It involves some family history which he apparently does not want broadcast, although he did not ultimately object to my using it. The other was brought to a fine point when, in the midst of our collaboration, an Irish documentary filmmaker

from New York showed up and insisted that Matthew be in his film about homosexual priests in the Church. This film was actually paying tribute to the courageous priests and other religious who are openly gay or lesbian. Matthew is known for openness regarding his sexuality and his celibacy. He has written a powerful piece, published in a book of his homilies called My Song is of Mercy, which is titled, “the Gift of Gay.” Also in this book is included his only published writing other than sermons, “Flute Solo,” in which, within the context of a manifesto of sorts and autobiography, he details his experience of being a gay, celibate man.

I had hoped to record him on film, saying what he had said to me when I had asked him why he “came out” in his late fifties when he had nothing apparent to gain from doing so. His response was so beautiful that it brought tears to my eyes. He said he came out because he had “everything to gain and nothing to lose. I did it for those many who are gay or lesbian and who live in guilt and fear. I did it to encourage them. They are the least of these in the eyes of the world and it is with these that I throw my lot.” Thus he is revered by many in the gay and lesbian community within the Roman Catholic Church. Matthew, however, turned the Irish filmmaker away. He told me, “*This* is my only film. Besides, I stood on my soapbox thirty years ago and I’m stepping down for now. It is time for younger people to take my place.” With that conversation fresh in my mind, I chose to respect his reticence, whatever may have been the motivation.

Regardless, I got what I came for in this film, and more. In one surprising moment he tells me about an elegant lamp in the monastery basement that had been built by his father. What he said was startling to me on two levels: one, in that I have used that lamp as a focus while “just sitting” for many years and had no inkling of its history or its linkage to Matthew. I always had a sense of Merton down in this old stone cellar, now

used as a dining room for the non-monastic workers and those poor souls assigned to stay in the austere and uncomfortable South Wing of the monastery. The light provides a warm glow, tucked into a raised niche in the wall. Sitting quietly there during meals or in meditation, I often thought of Merton's quote of Po Chu-i,

My life is like the crane who cries a few times
under the pine tree
And like the silent light from the lamp
in the bamboo grove.⁸⁶

What was the real surprise to me was Matthew's almost inaudible comment, "Down in the room where you eat." How did he know? I have no memory of his being down there when I was in the room and do not remember ever telling him that this was a special place for me. He just kept talking, and the reader/viewer will notice on the film that, after he makes that latter statement, I mumble something in astonishment and he deftly elides a response. Vintage Matthew.

With respect to this being his only film, I must qualify that statement. In addition to some grainy home movies of Matthew preaching, shot by the monks, the documentary filmmaker, Morgan Atkinson has shot two films about Gethsemani, one broadcast on PBS, in which Matthew figures prominently. Atkinson also filmed several of his homilies and a few of these are offered for sale at the Abbey gift shop. I have been in contact with Atkinson who has expressed interest in my footage for a documentary about Matthew which he hopes to make by augmenting existing footage. With Matthew's permission, I shared my work.

I tried to film Matthew from a "standpoint of *sunyata*." Yes, I would have liked to have captured my ideal view of the man on film, but that would have been a caricature. Matthew is a born performer and by the end of the three weeks of filming, he was no

longer acting. What I have on film may not be “box office,” but it is Matthew being Matthew and, on occasion, Matthew (his monastic name) being just “Charlie.”

~

Postscript
to Chapter 8

Childlikeness has to be restored with long years
of training in the art of self-forgetfulness.
And when this is attained, man thinks yet he does not think.
He thinks like the showers coming down from the sky;
he thinks like the waves rolling on the ocean;
he thinks like the stars illuminating the nightly heavens;
he thinks like the green foliage shooting forth in the relaxing spring breeze.
Indeed he IS the showers, the ocean, the stars, the foliage.

Daisetz T. Suzuki

*(from a passage underlined by
Frances Hubbard Flaherty
in her personal copy of Suzuki's
introduction to
Zen and the Art of Archery,
by Eugen Herrigel)*

Sticky hands get easily stuck;
sleepers and dreamers are hard to awaken.
People cling to ideas that please them and think they are right;
competitively holding onto shards and pebbles,
they think these are crystal jewels.

Chih-i, the Mo-ho Chi-kuan

Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies,
it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
Those who (cling to) their life, lose it, and those who (let go of) their life
in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Jesus

(author's paraphrase of Greek text of John 12: 24-25)

As this postscript is written, a full year has now passed since the filming experience
in Kentucky. Morgan Atkinson and I have become friends and collaborators. His film

about Father Matthew Kelty is finished and on the market. We continue an informal working relationship as he embarks on a major project, the definitive film biography of Thomas Merton.

Father Matthew has been seriously ill and no longer serves as retreat chaplain at the Abbey of Gethsemani. Having moved to the infirmary wing of the monastery, he has also given up his post-Compline homilies. In June of 2005, he was not expected to live. Yet he is very much alive. He continues to offer his 4 a.m. “milker’s mass” and is again seen doing his Grand Prix routine on one of the monastery golf carts as he remains a fearless and joyful driver around the grounds of Gethsemani. While I was visiting in early July 2005, he preached at the Sunday public mass to a packed crowd. He did not miss a beat. He was young again for twenty minutes.

We spent nearly twenty hours together, talking about many things, including comfortable discussions about what he calls, without morbidity, “Last Things.” “After all,” he smiles, “how much time is left on the clock? I’m nearly ninety you know!” This passage for him reminds me of a story he tells about an old monk whose life was the pre-Vatican II liturgy and whose greatest joy was quiet: Peace and quiet. As the old monk lay dying in the Gethsemani infirmary, all around him was the noise of jack-hammers destroying the Gothic inner façade of the monastery church. As he breathed his last, all he wanted was Last Rites, the rites of his ancestors. Alas, Last Rites had been severely redrafted by Vatican II, to be spoken in the vernacular rather than the ancient language of the Church, Latin. So he died without the words he so longed to hear and he died as the last Gothic concrete was being loudly blasted away in his beloved church. As Matthew would say, “The great lesson of advancing age is: Nothing lasts. But you get used to it.”

Now Matthew gazes out as the familiar fades into memory. Yet he is at peace, full of good humor, hopeful for the future. Of his rapidly changing circumstances, he laughs and tells me, "It was fun while it lasted!" The Abbot commissioned an acclaimed artisan to design a magnificent resurrection banner for the church in honor of Matthew's 90th birthday in November. Thinking Matthew would not be alive in November, the monastery hurried the dedication in order that Matthew may be there to see it unveiled. His comment, "It was kind of morbid; this being done in my honor in June since I would not be around for my birthday. I endured it."

His recovery was rapid while I was there. So much so that the Abbot, sensing a few more miles left for Matthew to go, asked him to be the number two man in the monastery, serving as Prior. Matthew chuckled, "Can you imagine? A ninety year old Prior? I would be a freak! People would come by the bus-loads just to see the oldest Prior in the history of the Order. Besides, administration is not my gift, never was." Thus he demurred, but accepted a new role as sub-Prior and preacher in residence.

These few days at Gethsemani gave me time to work with Morgan Atkinson on my project and to help him with his. It was a time to see old friends and enjoy the tranquility and hospitality of the Benedictine Rule in which the guest is seen as Christ. Importantly, it was a time to reflect on what this project had taught me, what I had learned. To illustrate the larger point, the significance of the project itself, I will include a brief anecdote which sums up succinctly the lessons of the Flaherty films, the heart of Zen and what I have learned from Father Matthew.

Thomas Merton was Master of Novices for many years at Gethsemani. This was essentially a teaching job and Merton approached it creatively, giving the novices under his tutelage a broad liberal arts education and an introduction to other religious traditions.

His under-Master and intellectual confrere was a priest-monk then named Father Tarcissus. Father Tarcissus went on to have a long and distinguished career as a scholar, a monastery superior, and continues intense involvement around the world in inter-faith dialogue. Now Father Tarcissus is known as Father James and he is back home at Gethsemani. While I was there in July he was chosen to take Matthew's place as retreat chaplain. Without further elaboration, his life has been full, but often sorrowful, even disappointing.

James (Tarcissus) has been a friend for many years. A humble, quiet man, he stays out of the limelight of the "Merton industry," contributing in a steady, lower-key, behind the scenes fashion to many worthy projects. As we enjoyed supper together one evening this past July, we spoke of many areas of common interest. At one point, I broke the geniality of the conversation with a direct and perhaps uncomfortable question. I asked him to tell me what he had learned in his life. He looked at his soup for a long moment and then, eyes glistening, he replied as directly as I had asked the question, "I can describe my life as a living witness to the words of Jesus in John 12:24, 'unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit.' That is the lesson of my life and I have had to learn it over and over."

This is the theme of the Kyoto masters, rooted in a thorough understanding of the meaning of death and resurrection in Christianity and a thorough knowledge of the ageless Zen texts. Nishida says in An Inquiry into the Good, "there is no reason to feel wonder at breaking beyond one's own small consciousness and realizing one great spirit. Perhaps it is our attachment to our small consciousness that is most in error."⁸⁷ Indeed the "Great Death" is a traditional theme of Zen teachings.⁸⁸ It is also the lesson of Robert and Frances Flaherty. The "letting go" of Zen as Frances underlined in her copy

of Zen and the Art of Archery, “how does one learn? By letting go of yourself, leaving everything yours behind.”⁸⁹

This “letting go” is the essential difference between my approach to making the film and the way Morgan Atkinson entered into his similar project. Atkinson’s work is excellent, demonstrating the marks of a professional who has done this before.

Comparatively, my film is unsophisticated by the standards of commercial cinematography. Ironically, however, it was Morgan Atkinson, the commercial documentarian, who insisted that I must finish this film.

Dogen famously taught that one becomes enlightened by studying the self and one studies the self by forgetting the self.⁹⁰ That seems to me the core teaching of the Flaherty films: forgetting the self. Once more, I learned how hard that is to do. An observation of myself and my subject during the filming pointed out the contrast between the putative film-maker, trying to project a philosophy within the context of a certain gracious awareness, all the while distracted by a thousand details and anxious that the effort was not going to succeed by certain pre-determined definitions. On the other hand, the subject exuded an authentically radiant innocence without thought of the morrow! By watching Matthew, by being in his presence, I found a tranquil center beyond myself. In his gentle mocking of my fumbling attempts to let the camera do the directing, I saw myself, not only an amateurish film-maker, but also, as a person learning from embarrassment, even failure. I finally let go. Most profoundly, I was confronted with the lesson that grace happens, in spite of my best efforts.

The Unconscious(ness of self) is to let ‘thy will be done,’
and not to assert my own....
This again is the spirit of Christ when he utters:
‘Take therefore no thought of the morrow:
for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself....’
Daisetz T. Suzuki, The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind

~

This has been a work of love. It came at a point in life where everything seemed to merge. Every good thing that has happened, every beautiful relationship, comes together in this work. I thank God for the opportunity to have lived to experience it.

In concluding this chapter, I want to share a gift I gave Matthew a few years ago on his birthday. It comes as close to capturing the “true man” as anything I did with film. The poem is a riff on Merton and Chuang Tzu. It is me interpreting Merton, who in turn is translating Chuang Tzu (a seminal character in Taoism and Zen) in a poem to Matthew. It is perched on the windowsill of his room in the infirmary.

It is titled aptly, if I may say so, “True Men.”

TRUE MEN

Father Matthew Kelty is 86 years old this November 25, 2001
and it reminds me...

Two old friends (friends of mine)
were talking once upon a time
and I eavesdropped on their conversation.
They spoke of a “true man.”
Now I wondered whether they meant
a man who told the truth
or if they were just puffing on a pipe.
Then I heard them call this man by name.

It must be pointed out that both of the speakers were dead,
but loved to talk, so their conversation went on and on.
One had no religion, but was claimed by a couple.
The other had a profession, a vocation,
but some of his fellows wondered about him.
Wondered about the company he kept.

Speaking freely got one man into religion
and the other into trouble.
Chuang Tzu was content with a Way that was no way
and Thomas Merton was content with very little.
Thus they agreed on the essentials.

Both knew something about the true; knew Who was true.
 A True Man for them was a lot like their mutual friend (mine too),
 Matthew Kelty.
 Here is what they said about Matthew this once upon a time:

*'Is Matthew cool? Only as cool as Autumn.
 Is he hot? No hotter than Spring.
 All that comes from him... comes gently, without fanfare,
 like the four seasons.*

*He is not afraid to stand alone. No great plans.
 When he fails, no sorrow.
 No self-congratulation when he succeeds.
 Easy come, easy go.
 A True Man."*

How true.

from Michael Bever to a True Friend.

CHAPTER 10

The Great Stopping and Seeing

~

...stopping can develop the eye,
the eye can see essence,
and you realize the essence of the world.

The great light is joyful concentration

Chih-i, the Mo-ho Chi-kuan

So we know that the veils are none other than the nature of reality;
when the veils arise, the nature of reality arises.

Chih-i, the Mo-ho Chi-kuan

Such persons are like those imbued with incense,
Bear its fragrance on their bodies.

That they may be called

Those adorned with the fragrance of light.

Shinran, Hymns of the Pure Land

It is not the case that an artist first has to come
to some kind of subjective inspiration
that leads to creating a work of art.

Rather, the reverse takes place.

The raw material of the world itself supplies
resources for the artist's vision and creativity.

Taitetsu Unno, Shin Buddhism

Stopping and seeing: the way of contemplation in T'ien-t'ai branch of Zen and held in common with Shin, or Pure Land Buddhism. Indeed, the 6th century Chinese sage, Chih-i, was a patriarch to both traditions. The method of stopping anywhere, anytime, is the way of seeing. Seeing is, in fact, stopping, and *visa versa*.⁹¹ Pure Land Buddhism, with Honen and Shinran as primary founders, teaches invoking the name (or vow) of Amida Buddha (the Buddha of infinite light and cosmic compassion) as the way to salvation, or passage to the Pure Land. This vow, or *Nembutsu* (Namu Amida Butsu), is stopping and seeing reality as "suchness."⁹²

The Christian theologian John Cobb has said of Shin, the Japanese form of Pure Land Buddhism, “The conclusion (of this essay)... is that Amida is Christ. That is, the feature of the totality to which Pure Land Buddhists refer when they speak of Amida is the same as to which Christians refer to when we speak of Christ.”⁹³

Shin teaches that Amida is the Buddha of Boundless Light and Eternal Life who provided inspiration for Gautama, or Sakyamuni, Buddha. Amida Buddha was the manifestation of Bodhisattva Dharmakara,⁹⁴ who had meditated in time beyond time (literally, a *kalpa* or for *kalpas*: infinite time), the “one thought moment”⁹⁵ when “the Name-that-calls”⁹⁶ calls each sentient being to its true self, its “prajna”⁹⁷ or wisdom nature.

Responding to the call, the Pure Land appears. The Pure Land is eschatological hope and a present, eternal, reality. It is to be found in the mundane everyday existence of all living beings. The mundane *is* nirvana, the Pure Land, but is obscured by the veils of delusion, ignorance, and judgments. These veils themselves are part and parcel of the Pure Land. In a gracious judo move, the veils are lifted and stopping we see that even they were always part of the whole of life. “Amida is not a transcendent Other standing opposed to, and independent of, sentient beings. Amida is inherent in all sentient beings... Amida is therefore at once innate and transcendent.”⁹⁸

It is quite possible that neither Robert nor Frances Flaherty would be completely comfortable with these allusions in reference to their work. Robert never proffered religious interpretations of his films, and Frances attempted to distance the work, in her various analyses, from a specific religious interpretation. It seems clear, however, that there was a “way of seeing” and it was a vision which had commonality with the mystics of the ages, from the latter Hebrew prophets to Pseudo-Dionysius; from Black Elk to

Martin Luther King, Jr.; from Moses and David to Eckhart and Boehme; from Hopi shamans who left their visions etched in rock to Georgia O'Keeffe who painted light in the desert. Robert Flaherty's vision arose in the dawn of epiphany. His "eye" was an expression of *the communion of spirits*. Many spirits, one brightness: this lone brightness, right before your eyes.

This brightness is reflected in the timeless apparition of Melchizedek, materializing on the scene at just the right time bringing bread, wine, and blessing. That little scene seems insignificant in the larger scheme of things. It is nearly lost in time, left on the cutting room floor of scripture, but for Abraham, David, and Jesus who were his beneficiaries. This communion is somehow captured on the Flaherty screen: the beatific vision that "stopped short at the end of Creation."

Stopping and seeing, Robert and Frances Flaherty stepped out of conventional time and space into that eternal moment when the Spirit looked out over all that had been created and pronounced it 'good.' Stopping, the Flahertys saw. Seeing, they stopped. The Flaherty films are living witness to the Name-that-calls in every moment, *this* moment. For it is in this One moment that the Name shines like the sun.

Nonpreconception. *Sunyata*. "Going into a wild field, not choosing... rootless, but finding life... right before your eyes it has always been there...", says Yuanwu quoting Fedeng.⁹⁹ *Sunyata* is "...emptiness, or rather a fullness, containing all possibilities... takes place on a dimension higher than that of science... or common sense."¹⁰⁰

Was that one word enough? Frances Flaherty struggled with this dilemma until her death. In the struggle she left us one final image: the image of someone whose life had changed in a flash in Samoa so long ago and far away. It is this image that defines the Flaherty oeuvre ultimately, the Flaherty "seeing."

As described a thousand times, ten thousand times, in koan, mondo, waka, haiku, shrasta, and sutra, by the Zen masters who became her timeless fellow travelers, in order to *really* see, a person must come to the End. Drained of energy and creativity on that dark day in Samoa, ready to quit, ready to give up, Frances miraculously experienced “a new world,” all around her. In that moment, Zen’s “Great Death,” she saw, *really* saw, for the first time. “In the Great Death, heaven and earth become new.”¹⁰¹ For the Flaherty vision had been born in the *point vierge* (see Merton quote below) of the North where all was light. Thousands of miles away in another seemingly inhospitable--this time tropical--environment, surrounded by strange sights and sounds, Frances Flaherty saw what Robert Flaherty had seen, and from that moment the vision was truly shared. The Flaherty vision is indeed a communion of spirits.

Go to the pine if you want to learn about the pine,
or to the bamboo if you want to learn about the bamboo.
And in doing so, you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself.
Otherwise, you impose yourself on the object...
Your poetry issues of its own accord when you and the object become one--
when you have plunged deep enough into the object
to see something like a hidden glimmering there.
Basho, Narrow Road to the Deep North

Again, that expression, *le point vierge*...
a point of pure truth, a point or spark...
inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind and the brutalities of our own will.
...like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven.
It is in everybody. And if we could see it, we could see these billions of points of light
coming together in the face and blaze of a sun that would make...
darkness and cruelty...vanish completely.
I have no program for this seeing. It is only given.
But the gate of heaven is everywhere.
Thomas Merton, Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander
(thank you, Father Louis)

NOTES

¹ The tapes total over twenty hours of conversation and served as a background source for Peter Werner's documentary film as subject, Frances Flaherty: Hidden and Seeking. The CDs utilized in this research are labeled "The Robert and Frances Flaherty Center at Claremont" and are numbered 168 through 239.

² Frances Flaherty, The Odyssey of a Film-Maker, Centennial ed. (Putney, VT: Threshold Books, 1984), 58.

³ Paul Rotha, Robert J. Flaherty: A Biography, ed. Jay Ruby (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 290.

⁴ Frances Flaherty, Odyssey, 10.

⁵ D. Marie Grieco, correspondence with author, October 18-November 25, 2004 (including photocopies of DMG personal notes).

⁶ D. Marie Grieco, Frances Hubbard Flaherty: A True Seer (New York: International Film Seminars, 1974), 10. (A tribute to Frances Hubbard Flaherty presented at the 18th Annual Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, August 29, 1972.)

⁷ Ibid., 12-13.

⁸ D. Marie Grieco, correspondence with author, October 18-November 25, 2004.

⁹ Rotha, Robert J. Flaherty: A Biography, 292.

¹⁰ D. Marie Grieco, 2, 14, quoting from "The Flaherty Way" by Frances Hubbard Flaherty, Saturday Review of Literature, September 13, 1952, 50.

¹¹ Rotha, 292.

¹² Frances Flaherty, Odyssey of a Film-Maker.

¹³ D.T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism, ed., William Barrett (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), chapter 6, "The Reason of Unreason: The Koan Exercise," 134-54. This book was a primary text for Frances' understanding of Zen and the chapter on koans likely contributed to her appreciation of the koan as metaphor for creativity.

¹⁴ D.T. Suzuki, The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind: The Significance of the Sutra of Hui-neng (Wei-lang), ed. Christmas Humphries (York Beach, ME: Weiser Books, 1969), 28.

¹⁵ Frances Flaherty, Odyssey, 60.

¹⁶ Ibid., 58.

¹⁷ Ibid., 56-57.

¹⁸ Ibid., 58-59.

¹⁹ Rotha, 279.

²⁰ Jack Coogan, Professor of Communication Arts, Claremont School of Theology, Director of the Robert and Frances Flaherty Film Study Center. Correspondence with the author, December 5, 2004.

²¹ Raymond B. Blakney, trans., Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949; reprint 1957), 206. From Sermon 23: "If I see blue or white, the seeing of my eyes is identical with what is seen. The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one and the same—one in seeing, one in knowing, and one in loving."

²² The "eye" is a seminal metaphor in Zen literature as the eye is a thematic image in spiritual texts of many cultures. The 13th century mystic preacher, Eckhart, has often been cited by Zennists and Christians as a common spiritual ancestor. See Thomas Merton, Zen and the Birds of Appetite (New York: New Directions, 1968), 9-13; The Secret Treasury of the True Dharma Eye (Shobogenzo) is the 13th century Zen philosopher Dogen Eihei's magnum opus.

²³ See Taitetsu Unno, Shin Buddhism: Bits of Rubble Turn into Gold (New York: Doubleday, 2002); Alfred Bloom, ed., Living in Amida's Universal Vow: Essays in Shin Buddhism (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2004); Frederick Franck, ed., The Buddha Eye: An Anthology of the Kyoto School and Its Contemporaries (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2004), Part III, What is "Shin Buddhism?"; Masao Abe, A Study of Dogen: His Philosophy and Religion (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), chapters 5 and 6.

²⁴ Nishida Kitaro, Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview, trans. David A. Dilworth (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), 101.

²⁵ Merton, Learning to Love, 11.

²⁶ Merton, Zen and the Birds of Appetite, 67.

²⁷ Nishida, Last Writings, 109.

²⁸ Ibid., 17.

²⁹ See Robert E. Carter, The Nothingness Beyond God: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Nishida Kitaro, 2nd ed. (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1997), chapter 2, "The Logic of Basho" (especially page 31) for a thorough discussion of this key (and

difficult to translate) Nishidian concept which I have only cursorily developed in this paper.

³⁰ Bloom, Living in Amida's Universal Vow, Glossary, 292. "*Jiriki*—Self-power; the consciousness that one achieves Enlightenment through one's own effort."

³¹ Ibid., 41, in "Shin Buddhism" Daisetz Suzuki explains, "Now *jiriki* is self-power, and *tariki* is other power.... Thus in *tariki*, *tariki* alone is working, without self-power entering.... Amida is the only important power that is at work; we just let Amida do his work."

³² Nishida, Last Writings, 121, "Perhaps taking our cue from Shinran's effortless acceptance of the grace of Amida, we will find the true God in the place where there is no God."

³³ The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way, trans. Jay Garfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), back cover, a translation of the Tibetan text of the Sanskrit classic, Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarika, "The Buddhist saint Nagarjuna, who lived in South India in approximately the second century CE, is undoubtedly the most important, influential, and widely studied Mahayana philosopher."

³⁴ Ibid., 34.

³⁵ Hai Tai Kim, "The Logic of the Illogical: Zen and Hegel," Philosophy East and West 5 (1955-56): 2, cited in Robert E. Carter, The Nothingness Beyond God, 55.

³⁶ Nishida, Last Writings, 108.

³⁷ Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, trans. Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), chapter 45. All other references to the Tao Te Ching are from the Stephen Mitchell translation (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

³⁸ Keiji Nishitani, Religion and Nothingness, trans. Jan Van Bragt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 296, 300. Sunyata is a primary theme, however, of the entire work (see chapters 3-6).

³⁹ *Prajnaparamita* is sometimes defined in English as "perfect knowledge" or "gone beyond." The term "insight" may come closest to the usual meaning in many contexts. See the introduction to Zen and the Art of Insight, selected and translated with commentary by Thomas Cleary (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999), vi-xiii.

⁴⁰ Masao Abe, Zen and Western Thought, ed. William LaFleur (London: MacMillan Press, 1985). See chapter 5, "Non-Being and *Mu*—the Metaphysical Nature of Negativity in the East and West," and chapter 7, "Mahayana Buddhism and Whitehead."

⁴¹ Muso Kokushi, Dream Conversations: On Buddhism and Zen, trans. Thomas Cleary (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1994), "Mind and Self", 64-68.

⁴² The Diamond Sutra and The Sutra of Hui-neng, trans. A. F. Price and Wong Mou-lam (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1990), 33. "Subhuti, when the Raja of Kalinga mutilated my body, I was at that time free from the idea of an ego entity, a personality, a being, and a separated individuality."

⁴³ Suzuki, The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind, 120.

⁴⁴ Moon in a Dew Drop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi, trans. Robert Aitken, et al. (New York: North Point Press, 1985), 119.

⁴⁵ Rotha, 263-65.

⁴⁶ Frances Flaherty, Odyssey, 60.

⁴⁷ Arthur Calder-Marshall, The Innocent Eye: The Life of Robert J. Flaherty (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1963), 248-49.

⁴⁸ Kitaro, Nishida, An Inquiry into the Good, trans. Masao Abe and Christopher Ives (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 175.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 174.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ For a discussion of the specific relationship between compassion and *sunyata*, see Keiji Nishitani, Religion and Nothingness, chapter 6, "Sunyata and History," 218-85, especially 277-79; also see chapter 4, "The Standpoint of Sunyata," 60, second full paragraph, and 119-67.

⁵² Nishida, Last Writings, 83. "The logic of the existential self requires us to say that in the self's own depths there must be the fact of the self's own self-negation as constitutive of itself.... It indicates...that the self and the absolute are always related in the paradoxical form of simultaneous presence and absence."

⁵³ "Falling away of mind and body" is a primary teaching of Dogen. See "Actualizing the Fundamental Point," in Moon in Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen, 69-73.

⁵⁴ Nishitani, Religion and Nothingness, 147.

⁵⁵ Abe, Zen and Western Thought, 94.

⁵⁶ Cleary, Zen and the Art of Insight, 154.

⁵⁷ Alan W. Watts, The Way of Zen (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), “The Rise and Development of Zen,” 77-112; and “Sitting Quietly, Doing Nothing,” 134-53.

⁵⁸ For a concise introduction to the history of Zen and the primary source of the author’s brief overview, see “Essay IV, the History of Zen Buddhism from Bodhidharma to Hui-Neng,” variously published, but initially published in English in Essays in Zen Buddhism, by D. T. Suzuki (New York: Grove Press, 1949). For a more thoroughgoing introduction to Zen, and further source material for the author’s presentational sketch of Zen, see other essays by Suzuki in this collection, and by the same author in Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D.T. Suzuki, ed. William Barrett (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956); and Zen and Japanese Culture, Bollingen Series, no. 64 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

⁵⁹ Paul Ricouer, The Symbolism of Evil, trans. Emerson Buchanan (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 352 (see also 353-54, 357). “In every way, something has been lost, irremediably lost: immediacy of belief. But if we can no longer live the great symbolisms of the sacred in accordance with the original belief in them, we can, we modern men, aim at a second naivete in and through criticism. . . . (T)he second immediacy that we seek and the second naivete that we await are no longer accessible to us anywhere else than in a hermeneutics.”

⁶⁰ Suzuki, Zen and the Doctrine of No-Mind, 14.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶² See “True Person and Compassion—D. T. Suzuki’s Appreciation of Lin-Chi and Chao-chou,” by Maseo Abe, in Zen and Western Thought, chapter 3.

⁶³ Burton Watson, The Zen Teachings of Zen Master Lin-Chi (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1993), 22.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 33 (*italics added*).

⁶⁶ Merton, Zen and the Birds of Appetite, from the author’s introductory note.

⁶⁷ Thomas Merton, The Bangkok Conference (Kansas City, MO: Credence Communications), n.d., audiocassette no. A3052. Audio tape of the so-called “Bangkok Speech,” delivered to an international conference, December 10, 1968, in Bangkok, on the future of monastic life in the various religious traditions for which monastic life is a recognized vocation. He was accidentally electrocuted two hours after having given the speech.

⁶⁸ Robert Flaherty's exploration indeed took him beyond the borders of what might otherwise be termed, "common sense." His sense became uncommon. His sight became insight. In point of epistemological note, Mahayana traditions include a devotion to insight and so-called "insight scriptures." For a thoroughgoing commentary on Zen and its origins in such "insight literature," see Thomas Cleary, Zen and the Art of Insight. Cleary's closing line is fitting as encomium and epitaph for Robert Flaherty: "Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone beyond the beyond" (152).

⁶⁹ For a complete and eloquent commentary on the concept of the bodhisattva, see Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, A Flash of Lightening in the Dark of Night: A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1994).

Brother Patrick Hart, editor of Thomas Merton's journals, has included in Merton's final journal volume a glossary of definitions culled from Merton's notes. See Thomas Merton, The Other Side of the Mountain: The End of the Journey, Journals of Thomas Merton, v. 7, ed. Patrick Hart (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 332. This definition is classic and to the point: "In Mahayana Buddhism, one who having attained enlightenment (bodhi), is on the way to Buddhahood but postpones this goal to keep a vow to help all life attain salvation."

⁷⁰ Frances Flaherty, Odyssey, 13.

⁷¹ Rotha, 40.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Rotha.

⁷⁴ Calder-Marshall, 225.

⁷⁵ Calder-Marshall, 225-26.

⁷⁶ Flaherty, Odyssey, 61.

⁷⁷ Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, 1859-1865, ed. Donald E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1989), 224. "Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell with the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

⁷⁸ John D. Caputo, Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 244-45.

⁷⁹ Living in Amida's Universal Vow: Essays in Shin Buddhism, ed. Alfred Bloom (Bloomington: World Wisdom), Glossary, 293. "myokonin--Literally, 'wonderful, good

person.’ Devout, sincere followers of Shin Buddhism who came from the lower classes in pre-modern times. They had little formal education, but their sayings were imbued with deep spirituality.”

D. T. Suzuki, who returned to his Shin roots in his latter days, gave a talk outlining his personal understanding of Shin, or Pure Land Buddhism, to the American Buddhist Academy in New York City in 1958. From a transcription of this talk within the text of D. T. Suzuki, Buddha of Infinite Light: The Teachings of Shin Buddhism, the Japanese Way of Wisdom and Compassion (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998) has been constructed “Excellence of Person,” Chapter 5. This chapter is a description of the myokin in his words. A brief excerpt may prove helpful here: “Myokonin... suggests a person who manifests the wonderful fragrance of spirituality. ...They are... goodhearted, kindhearted, unworldly, devoted... and lack any worldly sophistication. ...If they were... more sophisticated, their expressions would not come so directly from the heart.”

⁸⁰ Keiji Nishitani, Nishida Kitaro, trans. Yamamoto Seisaku and James W. Heisig (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 4.

⁸¹ See “El” entry in The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary, gen. ed. Paul Achtemeier (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 275-76. Also see New Interpreter’s Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 1:442, no. 5.

⁸² The New Jerusalem Bible, gen. ed. Henry Wansbrough (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 33. “El-Elyon, a compound name, each element of which is attested as a name of gods in the Phoenician pantheon.” Also see The New Oxford Annotated Bible: Revised Standard Version, ed. Herbert G. May and Bruce B. Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), Gen. 14, n. 16-17.

⁸³ Masao Abe, Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue, ed. Steven Heine (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 111, 146-147.

⁸⁴ Dogen, Moon in a Dewdrop, 204.

⁸⁵ Thomas Merton, Learning to Love: Exploring Solitude and Freedom, ed. Christine M. Bochen, Journals of Thomas Merton, v. 6 (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 286.

⁸⁶ Thomas Merton, Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), frontispiece.

⁸⁷ Kitaro Nishida, Inquiry into the Good, 166.

⁸⁸ Nishitani, Religion and Nothingness, 283. “The world we have here is neither the mechanistic world of modern science nor the teleological world of the old metaphysics. It is a world on the yonder side of all such determinations, a world of primal fact...without How or Why or Wherefore: a world in which all things become ‘like’ themselves and ‘such’ as they are, and are encountered ‘as oneself’ in their suchness.

The field of emptiness in which such a world comes about is none other than the field of the rebirth of the self—where heaven and earth are born anew in the Great Death.”

⁸⁹ D. Marie Grieco, “Robert Flaherty: Explorer and Film-Maker.” n.d. Transcribed notes from Frances Flaherty’s handwritten commentary and underlined passages from the “core library” of Frances H. Flaherty. Private, unpublished, photocopied materials used with permission granted by D. Marie Grieco, 2.

⁹⁰ Dogen, Moon in a Dewdrop, 70.

⁹¹ See translator’s introduction to Stopping and Seeing: A Comprehensive Course in Buddhist Meditation, by Chih-i, trans. Thomas Cleary (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997).

⁹² See chapters 5 and 6 on Dogen and Shinran in Masao Abe, A Study of Dogen, 145-220, for a comprehensive and provocative analysis.

⁹³ John B. Cobb, Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), 128.

⁹⁴ Soga Ryojin, chapter 16, “Dharmakara Bodhisattva” in Frederick Franck, ed., The Buddha Eye: An Anthology of the Kyoto School and Its Contemporaries (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Publishers, 2004), 229-40

⁹⁵ Tiatetsu Unno, Shin Buddhism: Bits of Rubble Turn into Gold (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 64.

⁹⁶ Ibid, chapter 2, “Great Practice and Deep Hearing,” 23-29.

⁹⁷ *Prajna* is a *Sanskrit* term, difficult to translate, which generally represents a deeper wisdom. Suzuki illustrates the term variously in his treatise, “What is the ‘I’” (especially section V), published in English in Frederick Franck, ed., The Buddha Eye: An Anthology of the Kyoto School and Its Contemporaries (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Publishers, 2004), see 33-34. “...*prajna* does not discriminate between ‘to be’ and ‘not to be,’ it is above relative knowledge. Just because of this ‘ignorance’ it knows everything in the sense that *prajna*’s knowledge is not to be subsumed under logic categories.”

⁹⁸ Ibid., 231.

⁹⁹ Yuanwu, Zen Letters, trans. J. C. Cleary and Thomas Cleary (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1994), 47.

¹⁰⁰ Joan Stambaugh, in the forward to Buddha Eye, xiv.

¹⁰¹ Nishitani Keiji, “Science and Zen,” in Buddha Eye, 121.

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